

# PRESS RELEASE



## FUND BRITAIN'S WATERWAYS

*For immediate release*

Date: 9<sup>th</sup> April 2025

### **Fund Britain's Waterways statement for the English local and mayoral elections, 1<sup>st</sup> May 2025**

- **80% of local authorities have a navigable or restorable waterway in their area**
- **A national flotilla campaign cruise will converge at Westminster on 7th May 2025**
- **A coalition of over 150 organisations has formed to campaign for urgent investment, with a former Waterways Minister calling for action**

Across Britain, almost 80% of local authorities have a navigable waterway or a waterway under restoration in their area. The network of 5,000 miles of canals and navigable rivers is a unique national asset which improves the lives of millions [1]. Waterways are a vital resource appreciated and valued by local communities, as well as contributing to the environmental resilience, heritage, health and wellbeing and economic prosperity of the nation [2, 3].

Yet the future of our inland waterways is threatened by more frequent episodes of extreme weather, rising costs and funding which is already constrained and planned to fall further [4]. It is in response to this threat that Fund Britain's Waterways (FBW) has come together as a coalition of more than 150 organisations representing hundreds of thousands of users and supporters of inland waterways. Since June 2023 it has been campaigning for national and local government to act now and protect the public benefit and natural capital of our waterways.

FBW responded to the HM Treasury request for representations to the Spending Review 2025, asking for an urgent review of inland waterway funding in recognition that the waterways are part of the national infrastructure and are already deteriorating in condition. A relatively small investment measured in millions of pounds would ensure that the country will continue to obtain billions of pounds of health, economic and environmental benefits. If underinvestment in the network is allowed to continue, we will get ever closer to the tipping point when waterways will be forced to close, directly impacting jobs and wider tourism and wasting the millions of hours of volunteer time and millions of pounds of public money that have gone into their regeneration.

In a final push before the announcement of the Spending Review outcome, an FBW flotilla of more than 30 boats will be travelling in convoy up the River Thames and standing off the Palace of **Westminster at 11.00 a.m. on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2025**. The journey started in Doncaster on 29<sup>th</sup> March when a group of six boats set off for London, gathering more boats and calling in at local events along the way. From Westminster the flotilla will continue its journey north to Boston and cross the Wash to Wisbech and the Anglian waterways, drawing attention across the country to the ongoing need for investment and support for Britain's inland waterways.

Sir Robert Atkins, former Waterways Minister, current local councillor and Trustee of the Inland Waterways Association, said:

“The boaters taking part in this year's campaign cruise are making strenuous efforts to demonstrate the strength of public feeling about the importance of Britain's inland waterway network and the benefits it generates.

“The cruise is not just about boats, it is a visual symbol of all the people who care about our canals and rivers and the architectural and environmental heritage of this historic network. Our elected representatives in local as well as national government must recognise this and work together to ensure that our waterways have a sustainable future.”

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**For more information contact:**

For further information about Fund Britain's Waterways contact [info@fundbritainwaterways.org.uk](mailto:info@fundbritainwaterways.org.uk)

**Notes to Editors**

The benefits of Britain's inland waterways are documented in:

1. [‘Waterways for Today’ report](#) published by the Inland Waterways Association (November 2022)
2. [‘Valuing Our Waterways’ report](#) published by the Canal & River Trust with social value experts Simetrica-Jacobs, with all methodology aligning with 2022 HM Treasury Green Book valuation techniques (November 2022)
3. [‘Impact Report 2023/24’](#) published by the Canal & River Trust, January 2025
4. The impact of climate change on the waterways and the adaptations required are documented in [‘Our Climate Adaptation Report 2024’](#) published by the Canal & River Trust, December 2024

**About [Fund Britain's Waterways \(FBW\)](#):**

FBW brings together a wide range of organisations with the sole purpose of campaigning collectively for an increase in government funding of Britain's inland waterways to avert their decline, and to promote awareness of the huge economic, environmental and social well-being value they provide. Established in June 2023, it already has over 150 members representing hundreds of thousands of users and supporters of inland waterways.

The full FBW submission to the Spending Review 2025 is available [here](#).

The schedule for the campaign cruise is at <https://waterways.org.uk/fbw-campaign-cruise>.